the peoples themselves, southeastern Europe has again become what it was for long centuries prior to its tortuous emancipation.

Its nations are, in the name of liberty, democracy, and security, engaged in an internecine struggle to help secure British lines of communication and Soviet frontiers. No territorial demands are too grotesque to be raised, demands which complicate a problem not easily solved even if only considering the interests of the Balkan peoples.

The conflicting proposals for federations of one kind or another equally disregard actual Balkan interests. In the case of such former federations as Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia the strongest people—the Czechs and the Serbs respectively—usurped the rule contrary to the spirit of a federation. Any new federations, however, would play into the hands of Stalin, who could maintain his influence within a federation by a policy of *divide et impera*. Apart from this consideration, a sound federation would presuppose a prevalence of characteristics that bind together over those that separate. We have already mentioned the divergence of cultural influences, historical associations, race, language, and creed, all of which show a tendency to assert rather than subdue themselves. One need only look at the topography of southeastern Europe, which cuts up its entire territory and offers few facilities for communications, and at the interstate trade there during the last prewar year (see Appendix). In short, the Balkan federations recently suggested would represent mere additions, not integrations.

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Nature herself has suggested a solution at least to the economic problem. The Danube, which forms the only link among the states of southeastern Europe, also joins that region with central Europe. Thus, although not a unit in itself, it is part of a greater unit whose integration requires no military, political, cultural, or economic coercion but only the neutralization of extraneous forces with aims not even remotely connected with the rightful interests of the Balkan peoples. In the common sphere comprising central and southeastern Europe, any cultural or political repression would be destructive; nor could there be any sense in restrictions being imposed on the development of any state in a particular field, whether agriculture, industry, or communications. In a community of interests supplementing each other as well as in the case of central and southeastern Europe, it would be suicidal. Indeed, in their mutual relationship, variety, instead of being an obstacle, would make for a richer and fuller life.

By ROLF MAGENER

Dr. Magener, a young German business executive, arrived in India in August 1939. A few weeks later the war broke out and he was interned. After almost five years of life behind barbed wire, he and his friend H. von Have managed to escape and reach the Japanese lines in Burma. His penetrating essay on the mentality of men in prison camps, written during a visit to Shanghai, is of particular interest at a time when more people the world over are being kept behind barbed wire than ever before in history.

HUMANITY has been seized by a strange mania to lock each other up. The age of world-encompassing wars has made imprisonment a mass experience, millions of people spending many years of their life in forced seclusion. As a mass phenomenon, the experience of internment represents an innovation of our century; the fact that one must reckon with increasing probability on having to spend part of one's life in internment camps is doubtless a new feature in modern life expectancy.

Imprisonment is one of the most serious mental strains human beings can inflict upon each other. But while everything is done to prepare the human being for other great tests in life, for his profession and marriage, for death at home or in the field, imprisonment finds him completely unprepared. Not only has he not been recommended to behave in any particular way: he does not even have the vaguest idea as to what experiences are waiting for him behind the barbed wire. Hence internment comes like a bolt from the blue and with a corresponding shock effect. Obviously there is a gap here in the system of our education.

Whether it will ever be filled in is doubtful; for no sensible system of national education can afford to represent imprisonment as something for which one should be prepared.

So internment will probably always remain a severe test of character for those affected, a test which everyone has to endure for himself alone, with the sole aid of his own mental equipment. Neither can he evade this test, nor can others relieve him to any appreciable extent of his burden; for every day he is challenged anew and thrown back again on his own resources. The spiritual coping with the prison world is thus a purely personal achievement; yet it leads in most cases to more or less identical reactions. For the external influences penetrate to depths of the personality at which most people react similarly. This explains the astonishing conformity in the behavior of prisoners and makes it possible to state generally valid facts about their mental condition and problems.

THE most evident change brought about by internment is that in the external environment. It consists in a distortion of the habitual experience of time and space, which is only another term for being deprived of liberty and thus condemned to inactivity. Space, which we are normally conscious of as being unlimited, is suddenly restricted on all sides and manifests itself as a tool in the application of force. As long as force is inflicted in the form of a single, limited act, it can be parried and overcome. But once it has been made part of space itself in the form of barbed-wire fences guarded with rifles, once force has thus been endowed with duration, the incalculability of its effect produces a paralyzing sensation of being at its mercy. During the first few weeks one paces up and down beside the bars like a hyena as if one could thereby rid oneself of this oppression of space. This phenomenon of space appearing restricted and hostile gradually loses its effect in the course of years; later on, space appears as something stationary.

The restriction of space involves a contraction of the distance between one person and his neighbor. All possibility of dissociation and hence of illusion as regards the value of the individual disappears, an illusion which he might otherwise maintain by increasing the distance. On the other hand, all private life also disappears, and there are more opportunities for possible friction. The area of internment, furthermore, does not offer the eye anything in the way of satisfying perspectives or objects of aesthetic beauty. As a result, the eye is always starved.

As regards the conception of time, it loses its customary significance. Normally we are conscious of time passing because things happen; but where nothing ever happens, as behind barbed wire, time becomes a void. It has ceased to be a meaningful sequence of activities and events and appears only as a meaningless subtraction from the sum of one's life. No longer does the empty time pass silently. Everyone in camp can hear the sands of time trickling down the hourglass. He can hear himself aging. In this way one becomes more aware of the limitation of time than outside, where one lives as if time lasted into all eternity. This experience becomes all the more acute the longer one's inactivity lasts.

NO less profound is the readjustment of all social relationships. Imprisonment cuts all social ties and at first levels all differences. One is shorn of one's name and is known by a number. One is suddenly severed from family and profession, from friends and opponents, from debtors and creditors—and experiences a certain sense of relief. One is rid of one's old worries for one's daily bread, nor has one any new ones, since the camp guarantees the minimum of existence. With the need and possibility having vanished of having oneself to acquire one's share of daily necessities, there is no scope for selfish instincts. They wither and give way to a more selfless attitude. In this sense, everybody becomes a "decent" fellow in camp. Since there are no personal things to worry about, one begins to worry about common affairs, and the interest in questions affecting the community is correspondingly great.

Before the overwhelming fact that all are prisoners, all differences in social standing or education disappear. Everyone is first and foremost just an ordinary prisoner and only secondarily the former general manager or mechanic. And the place the individual will occupy in the new camp hierarchy is decided in no way by his old position but solely by his behavior under the new conditions. Here there are different principles of selection from those outside. Whether a man is a good companion, a decent fellow, whether he has a bold, quick-witted, strong-willed nature, that is what counts. Little importance is attached to smooth manners; on the contrary, in the new social order such qualities are also appreciated which in ordinary life carry little weight or are frowned upon, for instance physical strength. That has its advantages. It precludes the interminable dragging on of conflicts and provides a breath of fresh air. Above all, it prevents the domination of intellectuals and snobs.

The absence of the feminine element represents a special hardship to the prisoner. In this connection we need deal only with the following aspect. Because of the absence of women and children, life in camp lacks the irrational element. In contrast to normal conditions, everything is regulated chiefly by sober reason and runs a more or less rational course.

Thus all that is contradictory, incalculable, capricious in human relations is missing. This undoubtedly means an impoverishment.

AS we have seen, the lightning change into the world of prisoners leads forcibly to a general reduction to zero. This cannot but involve serious psychological consequences. For the entire psychic energy which up to that point had been active in regulated channels is now suddenly blocked and overflows. This process manifests itself at first in a mild form of frenzy by which every internee is seized at the beginning. During the first few weeks one is virtually out of hand. Then the restlessness calms down as a result of the gradual readjustment. The reason for this state is to be found in the impossibility of transforming psychic energy into actions and deeds. One must not be misled in this respect by the prisoners' busy occupation with books, writing, and sports. It can never be more than a substitute or an opiate, so that there is always an atmosphere of unreality attached to it. When the psychic energies are prevented from radiating into outward activities—the outside points of attack for this energy being, moreover, reduced as a result of the rarefied environment—they gradually turn toward one's own inner life. This is an embarrassing process, for now one discovers oneself as one actually is and not as others have taken one to be or as one used to think of oneself. Thenceforth one has to get along on one's own capital, without credit from outside. This entails a certain deflation, but also a gain in independence. The final result of all this is a more or less intensified inner life, often enough against one's own will. In other words, the camp makes its inmates spiritually independent. By this we mean almost complete independence from outward circumstances and opinions combined with spiritual self-sufficiency.

The enforced psychological readjustment has to be paid for with a certain loss in vitality, which manifests itself in a constant feeling of discomfort, a continuous depression of spirits. In this respect, it is especially the feeling of inescapability which may become chronic. The internee can no longer imagine that the gates of the camp will ever be opened again, and there are many who feel uncertain to the point of helplessness when by chance they are left unguarded for a few moments. They automatically stop and wait for someone to give them orders. Complete liberty is the only remedy for this.

THROUGH the restrictions imposed upon actions of all kinds, the intellect is given wide scope, so that it becomes the real beneficiary of the stay in camp. People who used to spend all their time in practical occupations begin first to read, then to study, and finally to think for themselves. The elimination of the necessity for thinking along given lines prescribed by one's profession is, of course, a great advantage. One can devote oneself to studies without bothering whether they are of any practical use and follow one's inclinations in the choice of subject. Not only does one widen one's mental horizon: in studying without a material purpose, many have discovered that part of the field of human knowledge which corresponds to their own nature. With few exceptions who go off the deep end, this development by no means produces the type of the unpleasant intellectual. The hostile pressure from outside is so strong that all individual thought represents a sort of mental duel. It is not a bloodless constructing in a vacuum but an almost violent form of thinking possessing a certain degree of reality or at least of realizability. Perhaps this is the reason why prisons and camps have formed high-pressure chambers for great personalities, chambers in which they produce ideas of a forceful realizability which later revolutionize the political scene. The French, Russian, and German Revolutions present convincing examples of this.

HOWEVER well the prisoner may adapt himself, he will never get rid of the question as to the meaning of his fate. He keeps on seeking for an explanation as to why this should have happened to him of all people and as to what meaning he is to attribute to what is obviously so meaningless. In this way, the camp forces everyone to philosophize. And, according to his means, each one develops his own philosophy: the philosophy of the shelved. The theory of destiny's choice bears strange fruit. One man maintains that heaven has singled him out for imprisonment to spare him for some great postwar task. Others draw up a balance and see in their internment a punishment for past sins. But with a correspondingly long imprisonment, even the most hardened sinners come out of the red so that they gradually build up a credit balance for the future.

When one goes a step further and looks for the deeper meaning of one's prison existence, one does not get away so easily. To those who were taught, as we were, to see their justification for existence in work and action, the years of inactivity are tantamount to a pronouncement of death. How is one to retain one's self-respect without professional occupation, without in the least benefiting one's country? Here one is already confronted with the difficulty of having to make something as utterly negative and paradoxical as a dead life the starting point for constructive reflection. This is the weakness of any philosophy of the shelved; and in its negative form it can lead to the resigned conclusion that the life of the person

in question was an attempt that failed.

There are not many who profess this attitude. On the other hand, we frequently find the idea that the period of imprisonment, although a waiting time without comforts, offers excellent opportunity for improving one's knowledge to enable one later to be an all the more useful member of society. The upholders of this theory contend that, far from losing ground in comparison to those outside, one even gains an advantage over them. Hence one should look after one's health and keep up one's vitality! This has, of course, little to do with philosophy and does not bear upon the actual issue, which is to activate that which is negative, without regard to any practical application. To maintain an affirmative attitude toward that which is meaningless is only possible if one sees the object of life in conquering one's destiny. In that case, that which is negative has equal value to that which is positive. To him who tries to seize hold of his existence with his own hands, there is no difference between emptiness and fullness. He accepts all that presses in upon him as part of his humanity, regardless of its positive or negative quality. The fact that this must be done anew every day makes the camp a very uncomfortable place of sojourn from the point of view of the philosopher.

INTERNMENT is given a special stamp by the fact that the camp inmates are excluded from participation in the war. Although active participation is out of the question, everyone tries at least to participate spiritually in it. Events are followed with an accuracy and intensity quite impossible outside where there are other distractions. Only in camp can one enter heart and soul into a news report and fully savor its delight or bitterness. Out of the disappointment at not being allowed to share in the fighting grows the desire for ideological combat with the enemy. For us Germans the present war is more than a purely military affair. We are not only citizens of a belligerent nation: we are simultaneously the participants in a revolution. Hence the German internee of today is the representative of a revolutionary idea. He may be compared to a magnetic field. He is possessed by a fanatical idea which, similar to the lines of power, attracts, or repulses everything that comes into his field of vision. This causes a constant process of examining, elaborating, adopting, and discarding. Everything he reads, for instance, and be the subject ever so remote, is involuntarily drawn into the sphere of the new ideology, providing it with new material and often enough confirming it in an astonishing manner. There is no point of entry for enemy propaganda in this spiritual hedgehog position of the German prisoner. Not only does this propaganda glance off him: it has exactly the opposite effect. Every day he is filled anew with holy wrath against the enemy.

Where there is a ruling idea, this idea wants to be the sole ruler. It does not rest until the demand for its exclusiveness is observed by all. For that reason, camps with German inmates are models of a uniform political attitude. The process described here has a cumulative effect, so that the unexpected may happen: the morale of a German camp, instead of deteriorating, improves with the increasing duration of the war. In this regard, internment is not an apathetic waiting for time to pass but a confident participation in events. One does not think of oneself as of a lost herd or as cut off from home. The fact that Germans champion a revolutionary ideology probably distinguishes them considerably from camp inmates of other nationalities.

The more violently the war rages and the more sacrifices it demands, the greater torment does one feel at one's protected existence behind the barbed wire. Not only that one quarrels with one's fate, is at odds with God and the world: one is gradually filled with a feeling of self-loathing because of the fact that one is not making an extreme sacrifice. Most men deal with this growing sense of discomfort by making the greatest sacrifice that is possible behind barbed wire: a conscious renunciation of a life oriented according to one's own ego. They adopt an attitude in which the fate of the individual no longer counts, the personal desires no longer play any part, and in which imprisonment may last as long as it likes.

Countless numbers of men are leading a strange existence behind barbed wire. Although in many respects it is a restricted, limited existence, it nevertheless contains the possibility of a full life. The only thing is that it must be fought for afresh every day with one's own resources.